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Security Council

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Note by the President of the Security Council

1. The members of the Security Council reaffirm their commitment to enhancing the efficiency of the Council's work and agree on the following:

Conference resources

2. While ensuring the capacity to hold Council meetings at any time and at short notice, in accordance with rules 1 and 2 of its provisional rules of procedure, the members of the Security Council, during their respective presidencies, should ordinarily request the Secretariat to plan not more than four days per week of Council business, with Fridays normally being reallocated to facilitate the work of the Council's subsidiary organs.

3. Where appropriate, the members of the Council should ordinarily seek to avoid the need for draft resolutions or other documents to be translated over the weekend.

Interactivity

4. The members of the Security Council encourage the President of the Council, with the assistance of the Secretariat, to actively promote additional appropriate measures to increase interactivity and a more efficient use of time in briefings during informal consultations of the whole.

5. The members of the Security Council intend to resort more often to the use of video teleconferencing for briefing the Council, where appropriate, while preserving a balanced approach between video teleconferencing and briefings in person, including during open meetings in the open chamber.

6. The members of the Security Council encourage briefers to be succinct and to focus on key themes rather than reading out lengthy pre-prepared statements. They invite the Secretariat to follow the practice of circulating the briefing texts at briefings and, in particular, where their statements contain extensive or complicated factual information, encourage briefers to circulate written summaries of that information, whenever possible in advance, to allow for a more focused discussion during informal consultations. In cases where requested information or clarification by Council members is not readily available during the briefing in informal consultations, briefers may provide it at a later time.

7. The members of the Security Council plan to minimize, to the extent possible, the reading out of lengthy pre-prepared statements in informal consultations of the whole.

8. The members of the Security Council encourage the use of practical measures such as those above, which would make it feasible, whenever possible, to hold informal consultations on two issues in a three-hour Council meeting, notably with regard to situations routinely on its agenda, thereby promoting planning accuracy and overall efficiency in the Council's work.

9. The members of the Security Council express general support for continuing the practice of holding monthly "luncheons with the Secretary-General". Members of the Council and the Secretariat should continue to use the "any other business" agenda item during informal consultations to raise issues of concern. The members of the Security Council will continue their consideration of additional ways to increase interactivity in informal consultations.

10. The members of the Security Council will consider ways and means of further enhancing interaction with and seeking the views of non-Council members, particularly the interested or concerned States, on issues on its agenda.

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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for the period from 1 January to 30 June 2012

I. Introduction

1. The present report gives an account of the activities of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) during the past six months pursuant to the mandate contained in Security Council resolution 350 (1974) and extended in subsequent resolutions, most recently through resolution 2028 (2011).

II. Situation in the area and activities of the Force

2. During the period under review, the ceasefire in the Israel-Syrian Arab Republic sector was maintained. However, the UNDOF area of operation was affected by the ongoing domestic instability in the Syrian Arab Republic. There were a number of clashes between security forces and anti-Government protesters in several villages in the area of limitation. In addition, security incidents occurred in the area of separation, during which armed members of the Syrian Arab Armed Forces were present. UNDOF supervised the area of separation by means of fixed positions and patrols to ensure that military forces of either party were excluded from it. UNDOF also carried out fortnightly inspections of equipment and force levels in the areas of limitation. Liaison officers from the party concerned accompanied the inspection teams. As in the past, both sides denied inspection teams access to some of their positions and imposed restrictions on the Force's freedom of movement. Beyond such routine and temporary restrictions, military observers from the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), assigned to UNDOF as Observer Group Golan, continued to encounter restrictions of movement in the southern and central parts of the area of limitation on the Bravo side, where Syrian authorities denied access, largely in the vicinities of As Sharajah, Harra, Jaseem, Kanakir, Namir, Nawa and Tasil, ostensibly for reasons of safety and security of the military observers.

3. In addition, on 5 and 12 March, gunshots were fired at Observer Group Golan teams conducting their tasks in the vicinities of Tasil and Tal Shihab, respectively, located in the area of limitation. The incident of 12 March was confirmed to have been carried out by a soldier of the armed forces, and the one on 5 March was likely to have been carried out by those forces as well, because of the location from which

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the gunshots were fired. On 25 April, a soldier of the armed forces aimed his weapon at close range at an Observer Group Golan team carrying out its tasks in the vicinity of Ain ash Sha'rah, also located in the area of limitation on the Bravo side. UNDOF protested against the violations to the Syrian authorities.

4. On a number of occasions during the reporting period, armed security forces, some presumed to be soldiers of the armed forces, entered the area of separation. The most serious incident in the area of separation occurred on 1 March, when approximately 230 armed Syrian security personnel, including soldiers of the armed forces and Syrian police, entered the area of separation on the Bravo side. They entered despite UNDOF efforts to deny them access and warnings that entry of non-police forces into the area of separation was a violation of the Disengagement Agreement. The security forces conducted operations for approximately six hours in the areas of Jabbata and Trunje, located in the area of separation. Heavy machine gun firing was heard during that period, and UNDOF later observed wounded people, including some who were Syrian security personnel, being transported out of the area.

5. During the operations of Syrian security forces on 1 March, the Israel Defense Forces deployed a platoon along the technical fence to observe the incident. UNDOF maintained close liaison with the Israeli forces. Throughout the incident, UNDOF adopted the necessary security measures to ensure the safety and security of its personnel. By 2 March, the situation in the area of separation was calm, and UNDOF resumed normal patrolling and operations. UNDOF protested the entry of soldiers of the Syrian armed forces into the area of separation as a violation of the Disengagement Agreement. The Syrian authorities maintained that Syrian security personnel who entered the area of separation did not include soldiers of the armed forces.

6. On 24 February and 18 May, one small civilian plane breached the ceasefire line from the Alpha side and momentarily flew over the town of Qunetra and UNDOF position 27, in the vicinity of the town. On 26 February, two soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces fired five shots into the area of separation. UNDOF protested to the Israeli forces about the incidents, as they were violations of the Disengagement Agreement.

7. UNDOF continued to adapt its operational posture to the ongoing training activities of the Israel Defense Forces in the area of limitation on the Alpha side and to Syrian civilian development growth in proximity to the ceasefire line in the area of separation. New defensive positions were constructed in the areas of limitation on the Alpha and Bravo sides. Both sides maintained existing defensive positions in the respective areas of limitation. Israeli national customs officials continued to operate periodically at the post of the Israeli forces at the UNDOF crossing gate between the Israeli-occupied Golan and the Syrian Arab Republic.

8. The Force continued to assist the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) with the passage of persons through the area of separation. During the past six months, UNDOF assisted with the crossing of 20 students and with 14 humanitarian crossings. UNDOF, together with ICRC, facilitated the release of three Syrian civilians who had been apprehended and detained by the Israel Defense Forces on the Alpha side after allegedly crossing the Alpha line. In addition, UNDOF provided medical treatment to 115 civilians.

9. In the area of operation, especially in the vicinity of the ceasefire line in the area of separation, mines continued to pose a threat to UNDOF personnel and local inhabitants. Owing to the long-term presence of the mines and the deterioration of their detonation systems, the threat has increased. With enhanced mine-clearing and detection capacity, UNDOF continued to carry out operational mine clearance.

10. The UNDOF Force Commander and his staff maintained close contact with the military authorities of Israel and of the Syrian Arab Republic. Both sides generally cooperated with the Force in the execution of its tasks.

11. In view of the population growth and multiple construction developments in the areas of separation and limitation, the expansion of agricultural and cattle-grazing areas and an overall increase in civilian activities, the UNDOF civil affairs capacity, composed of a Civil Affairs Officer and Observer Group Golan, continued its efforts to obtain access to local authorities and civilians to explain the mission's mandate and activities. Its awareness-raising efforts were complicated by the lack of cooperation from Syrian authorities in facilitating contact with the local authorities and the civilian population on the Bravo side.

12. As at 11 May 2011, UNDOF comprised 1,035 troops from Austria (371), the Philippines (345), India (190), Croatia (95), Japan (31) and Canada (3). A total of 15 personnel are employed by Japan as a national support element. In addition, 76 military observers from UNTSO assisted the Force in carrying out its tasks.

13. Further to the Security Council's request in resolution 2028 (2011) that steps be taken immediately to implement the recommendations arising from the assessment of the operational capacity of UNDOF, I am pleased to report that there has been substantial progress in this regard. UNDOF continued to implement the rehabilitation programme to maintain and upgrade its equipment and infrastructure in an effort to maintain its required operational and security capacity. New long-range observation equipment, additional vehicles and force protection equipment and training were provided to the Force. In addition, offices are being constructed at UNDOF headquarters (Camp Faouar), and the rehabilitation programme was also initiated at the UNDOF logistics base (Camp Ziouani).

14. During the reporting period, UNDOF remained up to date with its contingency planning for various scenarios relating to its operational environment. It continued to make adequate preparations for the short and medium term, consistent with United Nations Headquarters policies pertaining to information analysis and the safety and security of United Nations personnel and assets. In addition, UNDOF civilian staff and Observer Group Golan were relocated from Damascus to the area of separation between 24 and 28 March owing to the deteriorating security situation in Damascus. They returned to Damascus towards the end of April when the security threat had decreased.

III. Financial aspects

15. By its resolution 65/302, the General Assembly appropriated the amount of $50.5 million for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012. The proposed budget for UNDOF for the period from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013 is under consideration by the Assembly during the second part of its resumed sixty-sixth session.

16. As at 21 May 2012, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNDOF amounted to $16.0 million. Total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at the same date amounted to $1,403.3 million.

17. As at 21 May 2012, amounts owed to contributors for troop costs totalled $2.3 million. Reimbursements for troop costs and for equipment and self-sustainment have been made for the period up to 29 February 2012 and 30 September 2011, respectively, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

IV. Implementation of Security Council resolution 338 (1973)

18. The Security Council, when deciding in its resolution 2028 (2011) to renew the mandate of UNDOF for a further period of six months, until 30 June 2012, also called upon the parties concerned to implement immediately its resolution 338 (1973), and requested me to submit, at the end of the period, a report on developments in the situation and the measures taken to implement that resolution. The search for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, in particular the efforts undertaken at various levels to implement resolution 338 (1973), was dealt with in my report on the situation in the Middle East (A/66/338) submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 65/17, entitled "Jerusalem", and 65/18, entitled "The Syrian Golan".

V. Observations

19. The situation in the Israel-Syrian Arab Republic sector remained generally quiet during the reporting period. UNDOF, which was established in May 1974 to supervise the ceasefire called for by the Security Council and the agreement on disengagement between Syrian and Israeli forces of 31 May 1974, has continued to perform its functions, with the cooperation of the parties. However, I am concerned by the continued restrictions of movement on Observer Group Golan teams in the areas of limitation by both parties, in particular on the Bravo side. Events elsewhere in the Syrian Arab Republic have also started to manifest themselves in the area of responsibility of UNDOF. This makes it all the more important that the Disengagement Agreement be implemented scrupulously. Authorities on the Bravo side are responsible for preventing incidents that jeopardize the safety and security of military observers conducting their mandated tasks in the area of limitation. The unimpeded freedom of movement of UNDOF and Observer Group Golan is imperative in carrying out the mission's mandated tasks.

20. In the light of regional unrest, the situation in the Middle East is likely to remain tense for the foreseeable future. Since the discontinuation of indirect peace talks in December 2008, there have been no negotiations between the parties, and the current crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic further complicates efforts towards Israeli-Syrian peace. I look forward to the peaceful resolution of the crisis, so that efforts may be refocused towards the goal of a comprehensive, just and durable peace settlement, as called for by the Security Council in its resolution 338 (1973), in accordance with the Madrid Conference terms of reference for peace and relevant Council resolutions.

21. Under the prevailing circumstances, I consider the continued presence of UNDOF in the area to be essential. I therefore recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of the Force for a further period of six months, until 31 December 2012. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has given its assent to the proposed extension. The Government of Israel also has expressed its agreement. It is hoped that both sides will make efforts to ease the limitations on the mobility of the Force.

22. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to Major General Natalio Ecarma III and the military and civilian personnel serving with UNDOF and UNTSO. They have performed with efficiency and commitment the important tasks assigned to them by the Security Council. I take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Governments contributing troops to UNDOF and to those providing the UNTSO military observers assigned to the Force.